

The Progressive Review

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Mob Politics

Three decades of political racketeering

Most Americans realize that they have lost control over their national government. But the question that remains unanswered is: to whom?

We tend to approach the problem as a matter of politics, sociology or economics. This is logical, but it doesn't go far enough and thus misses a major fact of our recent history: on repeated occasions over the past thirty years, the course of the nation's politics has been dramatically altered by organized criminal activity. From assassinations to illegal wars, from perjury to stolen briefing books, the story of recent American politics has also been the story of crime.

What follows is a look at this history somewhat in the manner of an urban crime reporter attempting to describe not merely individual acts of corruption, but the complex web of a city's organized underworld.

Throughout our recent past, we have repeatedly moved, shocked and enthralled, from scandal to scandal, in each case operating on the assumption that with investigation, exposure and punishment, wrongs would be set right and the ship of state would once again regain its graceful course. We see each act as a random event, shunning evidence that suggests it may be but a

small part of a pattern, that we may be dealing with serial corruption of the democratic system rather than isolated and atypical perversions.

The official line of the corporate media is that there is no pattern, that each event stands by itself, and that those who draw connections between incidents are "conspiracy theorists," "flakes" and "paranoids." On a few occasions, when a conviction is handed down, it proudly proclaims that "the system works," but more often the affair simply drifts into oblivion with perpetrators unapprehended, crimes unsolved, and critical questions unanswered. Once the media has used a criminal incident for its own purposes of public titillation, it moves on as though the past never happened.

The truth of major elections, prominent assassinations, curious murders, suspicious accidents, Watergate and Iran-Contra, have been consigned to America's archives as old news. And the pattern is never mentioned, unless to disparage someone who would ask the questions one more time.

This is not how the media covers more mundane forms of criminal activity. We have never heard a journalist claim that the Mafia is the figment of paranoid minds. At the local

level we are far more able to conceive of loose conspiracies with overlapping interests and agendas, at times working in tandem, at others bitterly opposed. We do not dismiss the existence of a mob simply because we have been unable to find its by-laws or determine the exact nature of its leadership.

Yet when we apply such descriptions at the national level, we are told that we must have a "smoking gun," that circumstantial evidence, no matter how massive, is not enough, and that such critical observations as association with known criminals do not apply at the federal level. The rules of behavior that the media willingly applies to local politicians and individuals, appear to contain a federal exemption.

In part this appears to be because of an assumption that illegal acts committed in the name of patriotism, national security or perceived necessities of geo-politics are not really criminal; at worst they are misjudgments, at best merely politics gone awry. Thus perjurers like Richard Helms and Elliott Abrams are given a judicial tap on the wrist for their misdeeds while the more common variety of criminal liar goes to jail, despite the fact that the former

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Bucking the system since 1966

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have harmed the nation to a much greater extent.

The danger of such a double standard is that the national security rationale is precisely the one used by those of the most totalitarian regimes when called to account following their fall from power. It is the 'good Nazi' defense. But in a democracy it's a dog that doesn't hunt. To grant an exemption from the law for alleged political motivation is to exempt politicians from the law.

What if we ignore this cynical convention of official Washington and convenient convention of a national media advantaged by the protection of powerful sources and compromised by its own participation in tainted policy? What if we look at matters much as we would in our hometown? If a mayor found having lunch with a leading mobster is considered almost universally of significance, why not George Bush's meetings with Iran-Contra criminals or Manuel Noreiga?

Viewed in this light, the events of the last three decades gain a new color. Many of them comfortably fit the language currently used by the federal government to convict drug dealers and other racketeers.

For example, the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act, the so-called RICO statute, defines a criminal enterprise as a loose association of individuals or group of individuals who commit criminal acts towards a common end. The association need not be a legal entity nor need there be, as Federal Judge James Lawrence King put it in 1987, "a heirarchal command structure." Further, only two criminal acts are required to establish a pattern of criminal activity.

(King, incidentally, was addressing a RICO lawsuit filed by the Christic Institute against "The Enterprise" of Iran-Contra fame, the first major attempt to apply racketeering law to a political mob. The lawsuit has been belittled or ignored by the media, despite growing evidence that Christic had the goods on Iran-Contra well before either Congress or its special prosecutor.)

Allowing ourselves the rational person's prerogative to perceive patterns as well discern facts, certain generalizations can be made about our recent past:

- While crime and corruption has always played a role in national politics, beginning with the Kennedy administration there has been

increasing involvement of organized criminal enterprises in national affairs.

- A political environment has developed, in part because of our paranoia about various presumed domestic and foreign enemies, that has encouraged illegal acts performed in the guise of national security. In some cases, the motivations were, in fact, political -- albeit badly misguided -- but typically the lack of a moral core to policy has permitted the political and the criminal to be mixed indiscriminately. This is perhaps most dramatically exemplified by the simultaneous use of BCCI by hundreds of ordinary drug dealers and other criminals as well as the intelligence services of five nations and one national government (Pakistan) to finance its nuclear weapons development.

- Much as gangs flourished during Prohibition or today in the wake of the breakdown of the American city, mob politics has flourished in the context of national political disintegration. As during Prohibition or with the Mafia, there is no single mob or conspiracy, but rather an atmosphere that encourages the development of various mobs and conspiracies. These mobs are not necessarily strict organizations but affinity groups of like-minded people working under cover of either governmental indifference or cooperation.

- While there may be a national political purpose to the criminal enterprise, it is not necessary. For example, there is the possibility that John F. Kennedy was assassinated, by either rightwing Cubans or the Mafia, for no better reason than revenge. The Iran-Contra Enterprise and similar operations often showed as much interest in profit as politics.

- A political mob, as with the more familiar variety, may engage in both illegal and legal activity at the same time. The Mafia has laundromats; the political mobs have legislation.

- The damage done to political institutions, whether intentional or as a random effect of mob violence, is considerable. Much of the damage done to constitutional principles over the past thirty years, for example, has links to mob activities and their effects on policy. -- Sam Smith

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The Taxonomy of Mob Politics

The Arab Syndicate

The Arab Syndicate moved into American politics in a big way just before the Reagan administration with the October Surprise. Iran-Contra revealed many interesting details of its operation. Most recent notoriety has been in connection with the BCCI scandal. Primarily interested in weapons and money.

The Cuban Gang

This collection of ex-Batista supporters, adventurers, drug dealers and zealous authoritarians have provided much of the opera bouffe and hitmen for mob politics. Strong Batista-era links to the Mafia. Their names crop up repeatedly from the Bay of Pigs to Iran-Contra, although often as contract employees for someone else. They formed an essential part of the Iran-Contra operation known as The Enterprise. Their biggest potential claim to fame would be if they were shown, as some investigators believe, to have been behind the JFK assassination.

The Drug Lords

Chief beneficiaries of the phony war on drugs, the drug lords have played a repeated and varied role in national politics ever since they joined with American intelligence after WWII to keep the European communists at bay. Especially adept at using American foreign policy for their own purposes as was demonstrated in the 60s and 70s in Southeast Asia and more recently in Latin America. The leaders of this enterprise include not only traditional drug traders but major political figures in Latin America. Both the past and present governments of Panama, for example, have been deeply involved with the Drug Lords.

The Enterprise

A hybrid formed of freelancers from the Spook Syndicate and members of the Cuban Gang. Played a leading role in Iran-Contra. Major ties to the Drug Lords.

The GOP Enforcers

This ever-shifting team of political muscle has operated in office and out, legally and illegally. Its godfathers have included William Casey, seconded from the Spook Syndicate, and Richard Nixon. Members have included John Mitchell. Robert Haldeman and numerous other Watergaters and dirty tricksters. They have operated as a sort of covert wing of the

Republican Party. While Lee Atwater was openly going after Willie Horton, for example, Elliot Abrams was quietly working on the Sandinistas.

The Israeli Syndicate

Like its Arab counterpart, the Israeli Syndicate has used American politics for its own agenda. It was involved in Iran-Contra and the October Surprise and is also believed to have been effective at purloining the state secrets of various nations, including the US.

The Mafia

This crowd need no description. It is the prototype. Although far from a major factor in mob politics, its name crops up significantly, particularly in connection with the JFK and MLK assassinations. It early established ties with the Spooks after WWII because of shared antipathy towards communists. It has also been closely linked with the Cuban Gang.

The Spook Syndicate

This mob is certainly the most venerable and most powerful of the various underworld operations affecting national politics. Sometimes working fully within the confines of official intelligence agencies, and sometimes as affinity groups of former or seconded agents, no single enterprise has so regularly injected illegal acts into American national affairs. The best known headquarters is that of the CIA, but it includes, from time to time, the NSA, the FBI and various other intelligence agencies. Known activities have included the Bay of Pigs operation, the encouragement of drug importation into the US from Southeast Asia and Latin America, the spying on, and disruption of, American citizens and their democratic organizations, coups and attempted coups against foreign countries, the conduct of various illegal wars and involvement in the BCCI and S&L scandals. Suspected activities have included some involvement, probably peripheral, in the JFK and MLK assassinations, as well as Watergate, the October Surprise, Debategate, and other scandals.

The Yuppie & Wall Street Mob

This recent mob arose in the eighties to take advantage of the Reagan administration's lax regulation and laissez faire policies. It specialized in illegal manipulation of financial markets with both economic and political consequences. It appears to have been done in by its own greed, taking much of the country with it, although new leadership appears to be growing from among those negotiating sweetheart purchases of failed S&Ls and their assets. What connection this enterprise had with other mobs seems largely coincidental, a result of independently finding the same targets of opportunity.

The press and the mobs

One of the curiosities of mob politics has been the less than aggressive pursuit of political racketeers by much of the national media. There appear to be two main reasons for this:

● When a major scandal brews, Washington journalists find themselves with a perplexing problem. The person or persons they have spent so much effort courting as a news source (and socializing with as a class peer), is now charged with wrong-doing. To move too early into an adversarial relationship risks both the journalist's sources and caste. It is far safer to let some other journalist pursue the story. If it turns out to be a dry hole, the friendly reporter retains the confidence of the source, perhaps even gaining stature by refusing to join the chase. If, on the other hand, the source turns out to be a crook, the friendly journalist can move with appropriate editorial sorrow into an adversarial camp before anyone notices that he or she was totally conned. Besides, who is going to remember, for example, that the the *Washington Post's* White House correspondent, even after other papers were on the case, labeled the story of Oliver North "bullshit." The problem with this way of thinking that is that it is so widespread that only a few Washington journalists are left to do the hard work. It is not mere chance that it was two local beat reporters who uncovered Watergate.

● Some of the media have been compromised by their association with enterprises regularly engaged in criminal activity, particularly the Spook Syndicate. This is not to say that the media were co-conspirators, merely that their relationship and loyalty greatly clouded their journalistic vision. As late as the '70s, a deputy director of the CIA could boast to Carl Bernstein, "You could get a journalist cheaper than a call girl." Major media with longtime intelligence ties have included CBS, the *Post*, and *Time*. More recently, at least two *Post* officials, Ben Bradlee and Bob Woodward, have gone to great lengths to cover up their past intelligence involvement. And there are some indications of renewed Spook Syndicate manipulation of the press in both the October Surprise and BCCI stories.

A timeline of political mobs

--1940s

SPOOKS

DRUG LORDS

MAFIA

--1950s

SPOOKS

THE ENTERPRISE

CUBANS

MAFIA

DRUG LORDS

--1960s

SPOOKS

CUBANS

DRUG LORDS

THE ENTERPRISE

MAFIA

---1970s

SPOOKS

THE ENTERPRISE

GOP ENFORCERS

DRUG LORDS

--1980s

CUBANS

DRUG LORDS

YUPPIES

THE ENTERPRISE

SPOOKS

GOP ENFORCERS

ARABS

ISRAELIS

--1990s

ARABS

DRUG LORDS

YUPPIES

SPOOKS

GOP ENFORCERS

ISRAELIS

This chart is a rough depiction of major mobs having a significant effect on national politics at various times over the past fifty years. The mobs are described in this issue's leader. A few notes:

- o The timeline only shows periods of significant involvement in national politics. Obviously, for example, the Mafia still exists today but it does not appear to be a major factor in national politics.

- o There are significant overlaps among mobs. For example, the Enterprise, the Iran-Contra gang, recruited from the Spooks, the Cubans and the Drug Lords. On the other hand, there was not much overlap between the Arabs and the Israelis, and the Yuppies-Wall Street mob functioned largely independently of other mobs.

- o The chart starts with the end of World War II, when American intelligence formed an alliance of convenience with the Mafia, druglords, and ex-Nazis for the purported purpose of fighting communism. In the late fifties, with the fall of Batista, the rightwing Cuban gang quickly started working with Richard Nixon and others to bring down Castro. It also joined with various intelligence types to form what has come to be known as The Enterprise of Iran-Contra fame. The 1960s were marked by major assassinations and mob involvement is strongly suggested in at least some of these. In the 1970s, a group of Republican government and party officials began engaging in major illegal activities, paramount of which were those associated with Watergate. In the 1980s, both Arab and Israeli interests began taking advantage of American political lawlessness for their own agendas, as did syndicates of financial manipulators, dubbed here the Yuppies. So far, the 1990s have been characterized by massive efforts to cover up past criminal activity.

Mob Politics

Three decades of racketeering

The President

JOHN KENNEDY

Kennedy, some investigators believe, made payoffs to Sam Giacana to help win the 1960 election. In any case, it is increasingly conceded that the 1960 Illinois election returns were rigged. Kennedy used the Spook Syndicate and the rightwing Cuban Gang, and possibly the Mafia, in planning the abortive Bay of Pigs invasion. Although there remain many theories on the Kennedy assassination, one of the more intriguing is that JFK became a target of the Cuban Gang after he worked out a detente with Castro. Another is that he was the target of revenge by the Mafia.

LYNDON JOHNSON

Lyndon Johnson has been credited with various corrupt practices during his rise to power. His administration lacked any clear mob involvement, however, nor is there evidence linking him to the three major assassinations of the era. Nonetheless, the Vietnam War presented new opportunities for illegal enterprises, including those of the Drug Lords.

The Events

The 1960 Election

The Bay of Pigs

JFK Assassination

ML King Assassination

RFK Assassination

SE Asian heroin trade

The Mobs

The Mafia?

Spook Syndicate
Cuban Gang
The Mafia

Cuban Gang?
Mafia?
Spook Syndicate?

Mafia?
Spook Syndicate?

None?

Spook Syndicate
Drug Lords

RICHARD NIXON

During the Nixon administration, mob involvement in politics took a major leap forward. The Spook Syndicate was given the green light to disrupt and harass progressive groups, the SE Asia heroin trade blossomed and for a climax, there was Watergate.

CHAOS

a covert program of massive spying on, and disruption of, progressive groups

Spook Syndicate

Secret war against Cambodia

Spook Syndicate

Destabilization of Chile. Assassination of Salvadore Allende

Spook Syndicate
The Enterprise

SE Asian heroin trade

Spook Syndicate
Drug Lords
The Enterprise

Watergate

GOP Enforcers
Spook Syndicate

JERRY FORD

The administration of Jerry Ford was a quiet period with little known mob activity.

JIMMY CARTER

Unique among recent presidents, Carter's major connection with the mobs was as a victim. His purge of the CIA helped to lead to the October Surprise. During the 1980 election, the Reagan campaign apparently used a combination of moles in the National Security Council and GOP party muscle to steal campaign information and Carter's debate briefing books. It is likely that the Reagan campaign negotiated with the Iranians to withhold the release of

October Surprise

The Enterprise
GOP Enforcers
Spook Syndicate
Arab Enterprise
Israeli Enterprise

Debategate

GOP Enforcers
The Enterprise

hostages until after the election. What remains in doubt is who was actually involved other than William Casey, a longtime member of the Spook Syndicate who later became a major figure in the GOP.

RONALD REAGAN

With the moral laissez-faire of the Reagan administration, mob politics reached new heights. A major new syndicate, the Yuppie Mob, developed to take advantage of the criminal possibilities presented in the manipulation of financial markets. As widespread corruption of financial institutions took place, it provided opportunities for pre-existing mobs like the Drug Lords, the Enterprise and the Spook Syndicate. Meanwhile, under cover of an alleged "War on Drugs," and aided by the Syndicate and the Enterprise, there was a rapid growth in drug importation especially from Latin America. This gave new importance to a theretofore minor collection of Latin American dictators and hoods, such as Manuel Noriega. Various illegal wars were pursued, either to prop up dictators (El Salvador) or remove competing operations (Nicaragua). The Reagan years also saw the rise of two rival syndicates – the Arab and Israeli enterprises – whose mutual antipathy the American families attempted to exploit, even as the Arabs and Israelis

The market scandals

S&L scandal

The war on Central America

Latin American drug trade

Spying on over 130 progressive groups opposed to war. Some 85 unexplained and uninvestigated break-ins

BCCI scandal

The Yuppie Mob

The Yuppie Mob
Drug Lords
The Enterprise
GOP Enforcers
Spook Syndicate

Drug Lords
The Cuban Gang
The Enterprise
Spook Syndicate

Drug Lords
The Enterprise
Spook Syndicate

Spook Syndicate

Spook Syndicate
Drug Lords
The Enterprise
The Yuppie Mob

were exploiting them.

The Arab Enterprise
The Israeli Enterprise

The KL 007 crash

Spook Syndicate

Iran-Contra

Spook Syndicate
The Enterprise
GOP Enforcers
Arab Enterprise
Israeli Enterprise
The Cuban Gang

Continuity of
Government: a plan
for the
unconstitutional
takeover of the
government in time
of crisis.

Spook Syndicate
The Enterprise
GOP Enforcers

GEORGE BUSH

Bush is believed to have worked for the CIA as far back as the 1950s, although he denies this. Some investigators believe he was CIA liason with the Cuban Gang during the early 1960s. His role in later events such as the October Surprise and Iran-Contra remains unclear and unexplained. Although he has not been directly linked to these scandals, he and his administration have devoted considerable energy to supressing the investigation and prosecution of Iran-Contra, the BCCI scandal and the October Surprise. He invaded Panama to punish one Drug Lord and replace him with another.

Invasion of Panama

Spook Syndicate
Drug Lords

Iran-Contra coverup

Spook Syndicate
The Enterprise
GOP Enforcers

BCCI coverup

Spook Syndicate
The Enterprise
GOP Enforcers

S&L Bailout scandal

Yuppie Mob
GOP Enforcers

Thomas: the secret witnesses

Ann & Paul Rockwell

Evidence is mounting that Clarence Thomas lied under oath. Three key witnesses supporting the testimony of Anita Hill -- not character witnesses but corroborating witnesses -- never appeared at the televised hearings. Republican and Democratic members agreed to exclude the most devastating testimony in the entire case.

In fluid, coherent testimony that runs over 68 pages, Angela Wright described the behavior she says Thomas exhibited at the EEOC -- his fixation on women's body parts, his derisive treatment of senior citizens, his derogatory jokes. Here are excerpts:

Q: Were there comments that Thomas made to you that maybe you considered inappropriate?

A: Yes *** Thomas did consistently pressure me to date him. Thomas made comments about my anatomy *** comments about women's anatomy quite often. At one point, Clarence Thomas came to my apartment at night, unannounced and uninvited *** I specifically recall being at a seminar when Thomas *** asked me what size my boobs were. *** Actually what he said was what size are your breasts. *** The Clarence Thomas I know is quite capable of doing just what Anita Hill alleges.

A: I can give several comments that I've heard Thomas make that I think are unbecoming of any individual. *** Jeff [an employee] was complaining about not being able to get money for something. *** I remember Clarence saying to Jeff: "Well, you know why can't you get any money; because you're not black enough. Now *** if you grew an afro and put on a dashiki, you would get all the government money you want."

A: One of the staff members were saying they felt pretty intimidated in

Mississippi because they were with an interracial group, and I remember Clarence sitting there and rearing back in his chair with a cigar in his mouth and saying, "I have no problem with Mississippi. You know why I like Mississippi? Because they still sell those little pickaninny dolls down there. And I bought me a few of them, too."

The testimony of Rose Jordan is no less concrete:

Angela Wright grew more uneasy with the chairman because of comments she told me that he was making concerning her figure, her body, her breasts, her legs. She became increasingly nervous about being in his presence alone. *** She came to me often times to ask me advice. *** I am sitting in the office, she walks in, slams the door and says: "Do you know what he said to me? *** Something like 'You have hair on your legs and it turns me on.'" *** Sometimes it got on her last nerve.

Now it has been learned that a third woman -- a special assistant to Thomas at the EEOC from 1985 to 1986 -- had similar experiences with Thomas. In a letter to the committee on October 13, as the hearings were winding down, Sukari Hardnett wrote:

Clarence Thomas pretends that his only behavior toward those who worked as his special assistants was a father to children, and a mentor to proteges. That simply isn't true.

If you were young, black, female and reasonably attractive, you knew full well you were being inspected and auditioned as a female. You knew when you were in favor because you were always at his beck and call, being summoned constantly, tracked down wherever you were in the agency and given special deference by others because of his interest. And you knew when you had ceased to be an object of sexual interest -- because you were barred from entering his office and treated as an outcast, or worse, a leper with whom contact was taboo. For my own part, I found his attention unpleasant, sought a transfer, was told one 'just doesn't do that,' insisted

nonetheless and paid the price as an outcast for the remainder of my employment at EEOC. *** The atmosphere of absolute sterile propriety permeated by loving, nurturing but asexual concern is simply a lie. *** I have told all of this to the Senate staff ** I felt obliged to communicate this in writing in order to put this on record publicly."

The letter from Hardnett, along with the Wright and Jordan testimony, has been available to the mainstream media since mid-October. As this is written, however, only the alternative media has used the story. Edward Herman, editor of *Lies of Our Times*, wrote recently in *Extra*: "The media drop a subject after they have exhausted their service to the government."

Weather Report

Just Say
No to
Negativism

Waste got? Want not.

As the peace dividend raises its happy head again, watch for the bait and switch. A good way to figure out what the right will be pushing is to consider what else defense contractors know how to make. Don't be surprised by florid rhetoric about the need for space exploration or some high-technology transportation schemes.

And, of course, there's also the considerable bill for cleaning up the mess the military has created at

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11,000 different places while defending our freedoms. You can get the feel for the potential here from the opening lines of a subscription appeal for a new newsletter:

Dear Contractor: Would you like to get a bigger share of the only growth area in defense spending? Defense waste cleanup! Defense facilities churn out 400,000 tons of contaminated sludge, solvents, acids and heavy metals a year. These wastes have been building up for decades. Largely ignored. Suddenly everyone agrees it's reached a critical stage.

Congress and the Bush administration are pouring big bucks into solutions. . . According to a New York Times report, this project could take "30 years to complete and cost \$400 billion, making it four times as costly as the Mercury, Gemini and Apollo space programs combined." . . . Cleanup of hazardous and radioactive wastes is where the action is.



A new book by a Texas historian charges that J. Edgar Hoover knew of plans to assassinate John F. Kennedy but did nothing to stop them because he considered JFK an indecisive, immoral liberal who was going to replace Hoover after this first term. In *Act of Treason*, Mark North presents evidence that the killing of Kennedy was a Mafia operation, led by Carlos Marcello whom Kennedy had attempted to deport. According to the book, Hoover favored LBJ in the White House because he had sufficient material on Johnson to blackmail him. LBJ gave Hoover a retirement waiver shortly after taking office.

Joe Klein, in *New York*, quotes a GOP analyst close to the White House as saying, "The plan is to play defense and hope we don't have a massive foreign-policy screwup. . . But just in case, I think we've got the fall of Castro planned for October of 1992." As we've pointed out before, Castro is being groomed as Bush's next "another Hitler."

Roadsigns

AIDS is now the leading killer of black women 15-44 years old in New York and New Jersey. One out of every 74 DC women giving birth this year was infected with the HIV virus.

While such figures are usually linked to drug use, study should be given to the possibility of another culprit: the War on Drugs. Consider what is happening in that war from a public health viewpoint. Young black males in extraordinary numbers are being sent to prisons where unsafe sex is rampant. The inmates then are released and return to heterosexual activity. It is hard to imagine a better incubator for AIDS transmission to a previously low risk population..

Even though nearly a thousand moose were killed in last fall's hunting season in Maine, some observers there believe hunting may be fading. The number of hunting licenses in the state is down about thirteen percent since 1981. More significantly, the number of junior licenses (children 10-15) has plummeted 38 percent in the same period. According to the *Casco Bay Weekly*, a state study found that "population shifts, suburban development and land posting have made less land accessible." *CBW* also quoted a University of Wisconsin study that said, "It is not out of the question that there will be no sport hunting, or a dramatic change in the character of sport hunting in the United States, by the middle of the 21st century."

Male television viewing, according to the Nielson people, has risen to 28.6 hours a week on average up from 26.4 in 1980. Female viewing rose to 33.4 hours in 1984 but is now down to 32.1. Teens

are also down from 1984 to 23.1 hours. And children under 12 are down to 24.1 hours from 25.1 in 1980.

In 1989, President Bush kicked off yet another war on drugs, complete with a television speech. As a result, the percent of public declaring drugs our number one issue soared from about 15% to nearly 65%. Six months later, the figure was down to ten percent and has drifted even lower in recent polls.

Just politics

Several major propositions received loud support from the voters in November while getting only soft coverage in the press. The voters of New Jersey, for example, voted three to one to urge national health insurance. In DC, voters by a similar margin made the manufacturers and dealers of assault weapons potentially liable for the mayhem they cause. The citizens of the People's Republic of Takoma Park, Md., as that progressive little town is affectionately known, approved a measure that called for allowing foreign nationals to vote in its elections. And in Maine, despite a \$1 million campaign by the highway lobby, voters de-authorized the widening of the Maine Turnpike, in a major boost to alternative transportation.

Perhaps most astounding of all, Texas voters approved the creation of a state ethics commission.

Part-time progressives

Here's a list of normally progressive senators who voted for the nomination of Robert Gates to be head of the CIA:

Akaka, Glenn, Kohl, Inouye, Leahy, Lieberman, Mikulski, Pell

According to the *New York Post*, and the *Rochester Democrat & Chronicle*, Mario Cuomo may have a Willie Horton lurking in the wings. A white man convicted of a 1972 rape-murder of an 8-year-old was released on parole in 1987, despite a parole report two years earlier describing

him as a "psychosexual maniac." The *RD&C* says the man -- Arthur Shawcross -- was "secretly paroled in the Rochester area -- without notification to the police." Last December he was convicted of the murders of ten women.

I've just about had it with all the bad news about lawyers and bankruptcies and strikes and business seizures and stock splits and profit-sharing and wars and bitter personal feuds--
George Bush

Feedback

● Larry Smith in New York City sends evidence of early support, albeit from a strange source, for the idea of political devolution. According to the *The Times* of London, Pope Pius XI, in a 1931 encyclical, said that society's decisions should always be taken at the lowest practicable level. It is a "grave evil," he argued, for higher authorities to usurp powers which can be exercised by smaller local bodies. Catholic apostates on such matters as abortion may wish to copy.

● An anonymous reader writes: "Media exclusion of all anonymous letters nullifies efforts of writers who seek to advance the progress of humanity without jeopardizing their safety and livelihood." There. Now are you satisfied?

● Tim Muck of *National Boycott News*, noting our comments about proportional representation, points out that there is a group working on this issue: Citizens for Proportional Representation, 42 East 6th Street, Cincinnati, OH 45202.

● Peter Cox in Georgetown, Maine, raises doubts about our story concerning Governor John Reed's insensitive comments on the damage caused by a hurricane, which were followed closely, we claimed, by the election of Edmund Muskie. It appears, by triangulation of hurricanes and gubernatorial terms, we got either the incumbent, successor or hurricane wrong -- perhaps all three. Cox recalls having heard the story, though, "but I don't remember who is supposed to have said it or in what circumstances." We'll get to the bottom of it; in the

meantime here is another governor story to fill the gap. According to former Senator Vance Hartke, Governor Brannigan of Indiana, frustrated with the duties of office, once told him, "Hell, Vance, I didn't want to *be* governor; I just wanted to be *elected* governor."

The mediocracy

The *Washington Post*, *New York Times* and *Washington Times* have all undergone major changes in editorial leadership this year. Results so far: the *Washington Times* has turned hardline conservative and far less fun to read; the *Washington Post*, perhaps the worst edited major newspaper in America, has become more so; and the *New York Times* has become more of a pleasure and less of a duty, thanks to improved layout and well-written stories. On October 18, for example, James Barron began his story on the big water main break this way:

The fragile, unspoken bargain that New Yorkers make with their environment -- that getting around town has its share of headaches, that the quickest way between two places is not necessarily a straight line, that roadblocks and reroutings can be endured with stoicism and a stiff upper lip -- was tested beyond all reason yesterday. Even by the sardine-can standards of New York, yesterday was a disaster.

The *NYT* also seems to be taking perverse pleasure in splitting editorial tacks with the *Post*, where the editorial style runs the gamut from cant to canonical, as the paper carries out its function as muezzin for the establishment. Not only did the *NYT* come out against Robert Gates as CIA chief, but it endorsed DC statehood, which the 51st state's daily has yet to do. Perhaps most astounding was the *Times's* editorial on the Thomas affair, written as an open letter of sympathy to Anita Hill. The tabs couldn't have done it better.

Waiting neither for the publication of Gary Sick's new book nor the congressional investigation, *Newsweek* has declared the October Surprise a myth. In a long article

largely rehashing known material -- such as the fact that some of the informants are pretty seedy characters -- the article seemed aimed at derailing the Hill probe. We're told that one journalist working on the *Newsweek* story was taken off the case when he wouldn't go along with the magazine's line.

About the only thing new in the story was the dropping of yet another alibi for George Bush during the critical period of the hostage deal. According to *Newsweek*, George Bush on October 19 was at the Chevy Chase Country Club during the day. In a story last summer, the *Washington Times* reported: "The Secret Service says he awoke about 6:30 am, had lunch at his Washington home and spent the day there preparing [a speech]." Meanwhile, the *Wall Street Journal* reported that Bush had lunch with Justice Potter Stewart and his wife on October 19. We'll keep you apprised as further alibis develop.

Meanwhile, the congressional investigation is creaking to a start, full of a zeal typified by October Surprise subcommittee chair Terry Sanford, who said recently, "Nothing would satisfy me more than to just be able to say that the investigation of this demonstrated that we could put it to rest for once and for all."

Let them eat euphemisms

From the *New York Times*: "Faced with another winter migration of homeless people into the subways, the New York City transit police chief said yesterday that his force will move aggressively to evict anyone found violating subway rules of conduct, even in subfreezing temperatures." The name of the squad that will lead the transit cops on this noble enterprise is the Homeless Outreach Unit.

The assumption that the wheeler-dealers learned something from the fallout of the 80s is challenged by news that Washington area lenders have come up with "new mortgage products," including some for "borrowers with too much debt." An upbeat lead story in the real estate section of the *Washington Post* (which also apparently didn't get the message) says:

One of the latest mortgage product entries, the adjustable-rate Select Loan offered by Intra-Coastal Mortgage Co. of Bethesda, offers a second chance to borrowers rejected by mainstream lenders because the amount of debt carried relative to the borrower's income exceeds lending industry standards.

Generally, lenders are not interested in borrowers with housing debt and other loans exceeding 36 percent of their income, said Intra-Coastal President Thomas Dean.

Under Select Loan rules, up to 45 percent indebtedness is acceptable...

Amazing coincidences

o Ed Rogers, who recently resigned as a top aide to John Sununu has landed himself a two-year \$600,000 contract with Sheik Kamal Adham. The sheik's an old Saudi intelligence czar who's moved into high finance with his principal ownership of BCCI.

o George Bush Jr. is on the

board of directors of the Harken Energy Corporation. Harken has an exclusive on oil offshore from Bahrain, right next door to Kuwait.

Field Notes

The Quayle Calendar: The wonderful people at the *Quayle Quarterly* have their 1992 calendar ready, this year featuring the Dynamic Duo, George and Danny. Each month features a fun photo of the pair along with meaningful (an real) quotes. For example, in January George says, "I will never apologize for the United States of America -- I don't care what the facts are" and Danny adds, "I stand by all the misstatements that I've made." The calendar is \$7.95 and the newsletter is \$14.95. *Quayle Quarterly*, PO Box 8593, Brewster Station, Bridgeport, CT 06605.

Media Without Democracy: A thoughtful and interesting report on the problems the media cause American democracy and what to do about it. [\$5 +\$2 handling from Women's Institute for Freedom of the Press, 3306 Ross Place NW, DC 20008. 202-966-7783]

Saving the Planet, by Lester Brown, Christopher Flavin, and Sandra Postel. A vision of a new environmentally sustainable world economy by the folks at Worldwatch Institute. [W. W. Norton, \$19.95]

Videos: Paper Tiger Television offer videos analyzing media coverage of social and political life. *Paper Tiger Television*, 339 Lafayette, NYC NY 10023 [212-420-9045]

Directory of Socially and Environmentally Responsible Businesses: A listing of over 500 businesses committee to making not just a profit, but also a difference in the world. [\$2 from Co-op America, 2100 M NW #403, DC 20063.

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